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The Order of the Palmetto was first presented by Governor John C. West in the summer of 1971. Governor Hodges, concerned about the large number of these awards, set up a non-partisan screening committee in 1999. He also modified a companion award, the Silver Crescent Award, which Governor David Beasley had established for those eighteen or younger in 1997. In May 1999, Governor Hodges made the Silver Crescent Award an auxiliary award to the Order of Palmetto regardless of age.

The list is as complete as possible through the midpoint of the Sanford administration, but the available sources have two major gaps. Staff were able to locate information about only two dated presentations for the year 1974 (Governor West). No lists have been found for the first twenty months of the Riley administration (all of 1979 and Jan. -Aug. 1980). Several sources were used in compiling the list: lists compiled by Archives staff from two Order of Palmetto folders in Gov. West's Gubernatorial Papers at the Archives; an alphabetical card file of the honorees that was kept by the staff of Governor James B. Edwards, 1975- 1979; a chronological printout from a data base of recipients maintained by the Campbell administration, 1987-1994; a chronological printout, Sept. 10, 1980-May 11, 1999, from a data base of recipients maintained by the printing services area of the Governor's Office; an awards data base maintained by the James Hodges administration; files received by Legal Counsel's office of Governor Sanford, 2003-2007; and a file of copies of certificates presented to honorees whose names do not appear in the other sources. Some reference was also made to the paper Hodges awards files in the Archives.

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